



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



ALWAYS REMEMBER FREEDOM IS NOT FREE

Recently we had someone stop in the SDDVA office in Pierre and ask why we had the yellow ribbons tied to the columns of our building. And so we

explained to her that they serve as a symbol of remembrance of the men and women who are serving in harm's way.

We've recently heard of three more deployments for our troops—Det. 48 to Afghanistan and 155th EN CO and 196th MEB to Kuwait.

So will the yellow ribbons at SDDVA come down? No!

Do the yellow ribbons show wear and tear? Yes.

These ribbons not only serve as remembrance of our heroes, but also symbolize that the war does impact our heroes and their families — so if they look a little tattered let us all remember that even when our heroes come home — they

have adjustments to make — this is not always a smooth transition and that many suffer lasting impacts because of their service to this great county!

This next week (April 15) is PURPLE UP day in support of our military children. Let's all make sure we don the purple and show them that they have our support and that we understand the price they and their family are paying to ensure our freedom!!!!!!

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SD ARMY GUARD UNITS RECEIVE NATIONAL, STATE READINESS AWARDS

Sixteen of 42 South Dakota Army National Guard units received national and state level readiness awards for 2014, announced by the National Guard Bureau this week.

For a second year in a row, the Huron-based 153rd Engineer Battalion received the Major General Milton A. Reckord Trophy as the most outstanding Army National Guard battalion in the nation for achieving the highest standards in training and readiness.

Fourteen units received the National Guard Bureau's Superior Unit Award in recognition of outstanding achievement. The Superior Unit Award is presented to units who meet highly-enforced military standards in the areas of personnel, training and readiness.

Madison and De Smet's 211th Engineer Company took top honors in the Superior Unit Awards category and was awarded the Eisenhower Trophy as the most exceptional SDARNG unit in the state.

Rapid City's Company C, 1-189th Aviation Regiment received the General John J. Pershing Trophy for weapons marksmanship. The unit attained the highest figure of merit (highest percentage of assigned members qualified) during annual weapons qualification firing with assigned individual weapons.

"Earning these awards is a testament to the dedication, professionalism and work ethic of the men and women of the South Dakota Army National Guard," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. "As a leading force, South Dakotans can be confident that our soldiers' training and readiness is at the highest level, and we are prepared to serve and protect our communities, state and nation."

The SDARNG continues a second straight year of training excellence. Last year, a dozen units received the Superior Unit Award, with eight receiving for a second time.

Units that received the Superior Unit Award this year include:

Battery A, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion*	Aberdeen
115th Brigade Signal Company*	Brookings
HHC, 139th Brigade Support Battalion*	Brookings
HHC, 153rd Engineer Battalion*	Huron
Forward Support Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion*	Huron and Parkston
211th Engineer Company*	Madison and De Smet
Company B, 139th Brigade Support Battalion	Mitchell
200th Engineer Company*	Pierre, Mobridge and Chamberlain
155th Engineer Company*	Rapid City and Wagner
Training Center Command	Rapid City
Medical Command	Rapid City
Company C, 1-189th Aviation Regiment	Rapid City
82nd Civil Support Team	Rapid City
HHD, 196th Regiment, Regional Training Institute	Sturgis

* Denotes second straight year for receiving the award.

PURPLE UP!!!!

April marks the nation's "Month of the Military Child," a time to honor military youth in our communities who have been impacted by deployments and the challenges military families face before, during and after deployments.

In tribute to the 7,500 military children in the state, South Dakota's Operation: Military Kids (OMK) Program, part of the 4-H Youth Development program of SDSU Cooperative Extension, is inviting everyone to join in and be part of the "Purple Up! For Military Kids Day," being held Wednesday, April 15.

South Dakota communities, businesses and organizations are being encouraged to wear purple on that date, as a tangible way to show their support and thanks to all military children for their strength and sacrifices. Established by Casper Weinberger in 1986, the Month of the Military Child recognizes the important role military children play in our communities. We pause each year to honor the millions of military children for their contributions to their families.

According to Sheila Troxel Snyder, OMK state coordinator, purple is the color that symbolizes all branches of the military, a combination of Army green, Coast Guard blue, Air Force blue, Marine red and Navy blue.



"OMK hopes everyone will take this opportunity to appreciate and celebrate these young heroes and make it possible for military kids to visually witness the support of their community," said Snyder.

OMK is an ongoing, dynamic program to support and promote the children of deployed military service professionals. OMK is a collaborative effort between the U.S. Army, South Dakota 4-H, American Legion, and Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Its purpose is to provide local community support for the children of service women and men from South Dakota. The South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service administers the program and its offices are located at South Dakota State University's West River Agricultural Center in Rapid.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about Purple Up! For Military Kids Day, please contact Ms. Sheila Troxel Snyder, SD State OMK coordinator, at the SDSU West River Ag Center at 605-394-2236, or at Sheila.snyder@sdstate.edu

MJFVH HOSTS ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT



This past Saturday, the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home hosted the annual Hot Springs Community Easter egg hunt on the campus of the Home.

The event is sponsored by the Hot Springs Area Chamber of Commerce and the Battle Mountain Post 71 American Legion Riders.

DAVIDSON CONTINUES TO GROW HER OUTREACH EFFORTS

Davison County VSO Jessica Davidson continues to grow her outreach footprint in her respective county. Davison and SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Bowen recently addressed the Mitchell Rotary Club about veteran benefits and the role of the county veteran service officer.

This same duo addressed the National Funeral Directors District II meeting in Mitchell and addressed registering discharges, state and federal burial benefits and the role of the county veteran service officer.



CTVSO TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Last week, SDDVA's team worked diligently to develop training criteria for the spring Mini Conferences. Topics that will be covered during the conference include: filing PTSD claims and understanding the rating schedule for filing for increases, new VA forms and the new process for filing, new vital records form, E-signatures on DD 214s, Vetraspec tutorials and what format that information needs to be in the system to utilize the Stakeholders Enterprise Portal (SEP) for dependency claims, and clarification on the SD Bonus applications.

Conferences will be held at the following locations.

May 5—SDDVA Mini Conference—Sturgis (Veterans Club—868 Main Street) —10:00 am (MT)

May 6—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pierre (Post 8 American Legion—520 S. Pierre Street) —10:00 am

May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—Sioux Falls (VA Regional Office) —9:00 am

This week SDDVA staff met to develop the training roadmap for the upcoming benefits school in August. Please note the conference will start at 1:00 pm on Monday, August 24, and conclude by noon on Thursday, August 27. Room reservations can be made by calling the Pierre Ramkota Hotel and asking for the "Veterans Affairs" room block (605-224-6877). Or you can email them to:

reservations@pierreramkota.com and request a room within that same block.

Dates for future benefit schools are as follows:

2016 – August 22-25

2017 – August 14-17

2018 – August 27-30

2019 – August 26-29

2020 – August 24-27



RAPID CITY NATIONAL GUARD UNIT TO DEPLOY TO AFGHANISTAN

The South Dakota Army National Guard's Detachment 48, Operational Support Airlift Command, has received a mobilization order for deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Six members of the Rapid City-based unit are scheduled for deployment in May.

Detachment 48 is fixed-wing aviation unit comprised of pilots and operations specialists which operate the C-12 King Air. The unit provides airlift support for the National Guard, military departments and federal agencies as scheduled by the OSA Command. The unit's primary mission in theater will be providing aerial surveillance in support of ground commanders in the field.

The unit will report to Fort Bliss, Texas, to complete several weeks of theater-specific training prior to deployment overseas. This will be the third mobilization for Det. 48, which deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2008 and 2011-2012.

PODZIMEK TO RECEIVE GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR LEADERSHIP AWARD

The U.S. Army announced that a South Dakota Army National Guard warrant officer will receive the General Douglas MacArthur leadership award, during a May 29 ceremony at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia.

Warrant Officer Kenneth Podzimek, of Wagner, a construction engineer technician in the 155th Engineer Company is the first SDARNG warrant officer to receive the award.

The U.S. Army awards one warrant officer and six officers annually, from the active duty component, the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard, who demonstrate the ideals for which General MacArthur stood – duty, honor and country.

“When I found out that one warrant officer in the entire National Guard would be selected, I figured my chance of winning this award were slim to none,” said Podzimek. “When I read the list of award winners and saw my name...I had to read it about three to four more times. I couldn’t believe it.”

Just one example of Podzimek’s effective leadership style was demonstrated when the 155th suffered the loss of a Soldier, said Lt. Col. David Dailey, 153rd Engineer Battalion commander. “He led from the front, took the time to talk to his Soldiers individually and mentored them through a very difficult time,” said Dailey. “He has been an instrumental leader, using his abilities to mentor his subordinates to become a cohesive and resilient platoon.”

Podzimek’s technical knowledge shined when he managed more than four construction projects and his team responded to the flood operations in southeast South Dakota and the tornado clean up for the Wessington Springs community, said Dailey. “He always makes an extraordinary effort to ensure his company is able to accomplish any mission,” said Dailey. “His dedication and integrity to the mission first, epitomizes the ideals for which this award stands for.”

Outside of his National Guard commitment, Podzimek balances duties as a full-time electrician for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and an owner of a part-time cooling and heating business. Podzimek is active in his community, volunteering his time and resources to his local fire department and VFW Post 7319.

“His willingness to give back to his community through volunteering his time to local organizations directly reflects his values,” Dailey said. “He is a top notch leader with unlimited potential that, without a doubt, has earned him the distinction of being recognized as the General Douglas Leadership award recipient.”





Photo © Beltman/Corbis

A CIA operative loads refugees into a helicopter on the top of a building near the besieged U.S. Embassy in Saigon.

Preview The Film

- American Legion Post 8, Pierre, Saturday, March 28, 7pm.
- Multi-Cultural Center, Sioux Falls, Sunday, April 19, 2pm.
- Journey Museum, Rapid City, Wednesday, April 22, 7pm.

Last Days in Vietnam

SDPB1: Tuesday, April 28, 8pm (7 MT)
SDPB2: Wednesday, April 29, 6 & 11pm (5 & 10 MT)
<http://PBS.org/AmericanExperience>

The Draft

SDPB1: Monday, April 27, 8pm (7 MT)

Dick Cavett's Vietnam

SDPB1: Monday, April 27, 9pm (8 MT)
SDPB2: Wednesday, April 29, 8pm (7 MT)

The Day the 60s Died

SDPB1: Tuesday, April 28, 7pm (6 MT)

True Heroics, Epic Struggle

It was April 1975. During the chaotic final days of the Vietnam War, as the North Vietnamese Army closed in on Saigon, South Vietnamese resistance crumbled.

It happened so fast. The lives of thousands of South Vietnamese allies were hanging in the balance. Americans faced an impossible choice – who would go and who would be left behind to what was expected be a cruel future.

Last Days in Vietnam, a film presented by **American Experience**, tells a story of chaos, heroism and tragedy. The Oscar-nominated film, directed by Rory Kennedy, airs in conjunction with the 40th anniversary of the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975.

The 1973 Paris Peace Accords had forged a tenuous ceasefire between North and South Vietnam, and mandated the removal of almost all U.S. forces. As North Vietnam violated the ceasefire in 1975, President Gerald Ford asked Congress for an emergency appropriation to aid the beleaguered South Vietnamese government. The White House expected that neither Congress nor the American people would support it. Says then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, "We knew we were not going to get the \$722 million. By that

time, it made no big difference, [but] President Ford said first he owed it to Vietnam to make a request."

By early March 1975, huge swaths of territory were overrun daily and, by the end of the month, the North Vietnamese Army had surrounded the capital, preparing to launch its final assault on Saigon – 11 months ahead of schedule.

On the ground, American officers found themselves faced with a moral dilemma: whether to follow official policy and evacuate only U.S. citizens and their dependents, or to go beyond orders and save some of the Vietnamese men, women and children.

At the risk of their careers and possible courts-martial, a handful of individuals took matters into their own

hands. Engaging in unsanctioned and often makeshift operations, they waged a desperate effort to evacuate as many South Vietnamese as possible. Over the final days, they used rafts, cargo planes, and helicopters to help tens of thousands escape.

Screenings are supported by a grant from WGBH Boston, which produces American Experience for PBS. Exclusive corporate funding for American Experience is provided by Liberty Mutual Insurance. Major funding provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Additional funding for "Last Days in Vietnam" provided by The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations: Dedicated to Strengthening America's Future Through Education; The Documentary Investment Group; Gretchen Stone Cook Charitable Foundation; Roxanne E. & Michael J. Zak; and by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and public television viewers.

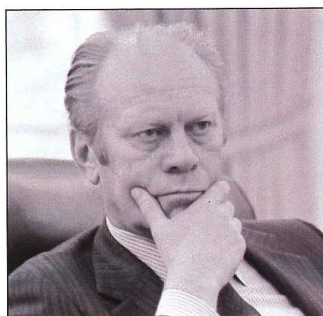


Photo: Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library

President Gerald R. Ford listens to a briefing from Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.



Photo: Craig Compiano, USS KIRK Association

Sailors push a helicopter off the USS Kirk to make landing room for more refugee-filled helicopters.

Upcoming Events

Apr. 14—World War II Stories Relived—SDNG Museum—Pierre—7:00 pm
Apr. 15—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting (DAV—Sioux Falls) 10:00 am
Apr. 23—ICVCSF Conference—Aberdeen
Apr 24—ISVCSF Conference—Yankton
May 1-3—DAV Convention—Sioux Falls Holiday Inn City Centre
May 5—SDDVA Mini Conference—Sturgis (Veterans Club—868 Main Street) —10:00 am (MT)
May 6—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pierre (Post 8 American Legion—520 S. Pierre Street) —10:00 am
May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—Sioux Falls (VA Regional Office) —9:00 am
Jun. 18-21—VFW State Convention—Yankton, SD
Jun. 24—Black Hills Job Fair—Western Dakota Tech—Rapid City—12;30—5:00 pm (MT)
Jun.. 25-28—American Legion 97th Annual State Convention—Huron Crossroads Convention Center
Jul. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
Aug. 5-9—AVTT Traveling Vietnam Wall Comes to Sioux Falls (Sanford Pentagon Sports Complex)
Aug. 24-27—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—Ramkota—Pierre
Oct. 9—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

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